

SOCI 102 – The Impact of Improving Access to Office Hours on Student-Faculty/TA Interactions

Neil Armitage, Patty Hamblar, Michael Lee, Diana Jung, Karen Smith, Steven Barnes, Judy Chan, Natasha Moore & Blaga Ivanova

Faculty lead – Neil Armitage

Neil believes it is important to integrate a sense of belonging into the classroom environment, as without it, learning can be difficult. He likes to be as transparent with his students as possible, and believes accessible office hours and communication help to facilitate knowledge sharing and learning. Neil teaches large first year courses and recognizes the important role TAs have in reaching students. As such, he holds joint offices hours with TAs in a centrally located area and the online space-Piazza.



Students' Interactions Outside of the Classroom

Student-faculty interactions are a key aspect in the collegiate experience, and office hours “represent the institutional commitment to student-faculty interaction”—and is regarded as one of the best practices in undergraduate education (Smith et al., 2017, p. 14).

Positive out-of-class interactions with faculty have been shown to benefit sense of belonging (Glass et al., 2015), as well as student wellbeing (Bowman, 2010) and academic achievement (O’Keeffe, 2013).

Research question

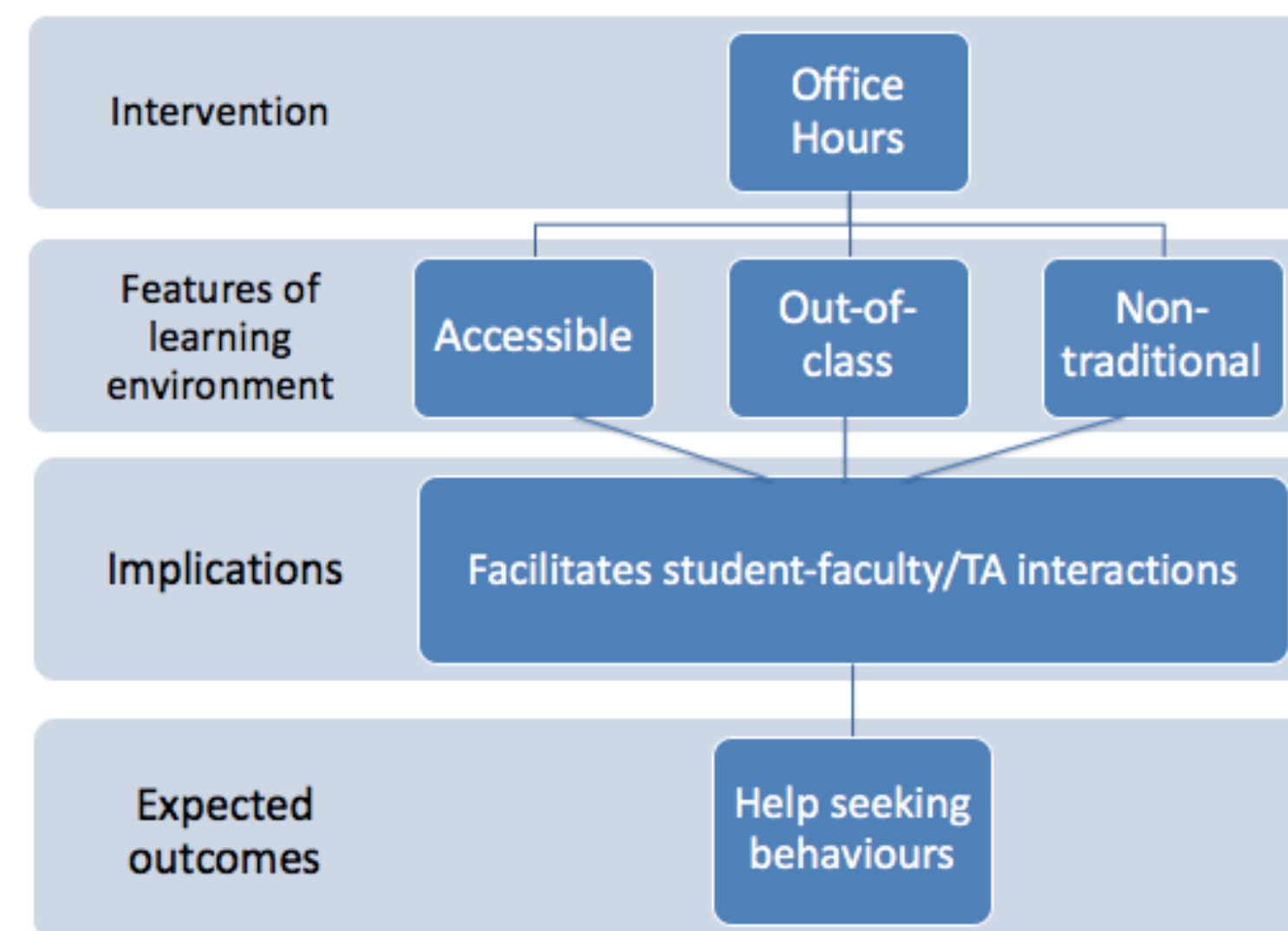
How does holding combined faculty and TA office hours in a centrally located space and online environment impact student-faculty/TA interactions – specifically, students’ help-seeking behaviours?

Evaluation

Students were surveyed in the first two weeks and at the end of the course on their help-seeking behaviour. At the end of the course, students were also surveyed on Piazza use, office-hour use, and belonging both within SOCI 102 and at UBC. This survey was highly tailored to the course and included a brief selection of items from the Sense of Belonging Scale (Hoffman et al., 2003; Tovar & Simon, 2010) as well as adapted questions from the Undergraduate Experience Survey (UBC, 2018).

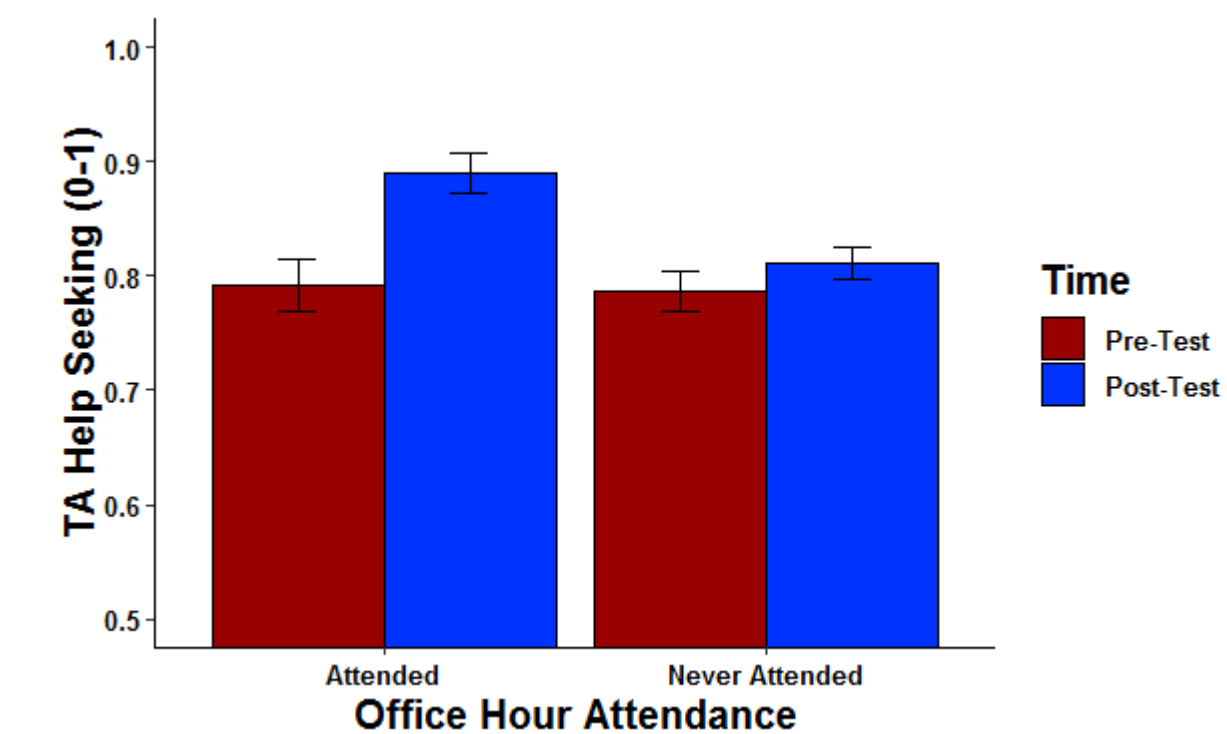


Educational strategy



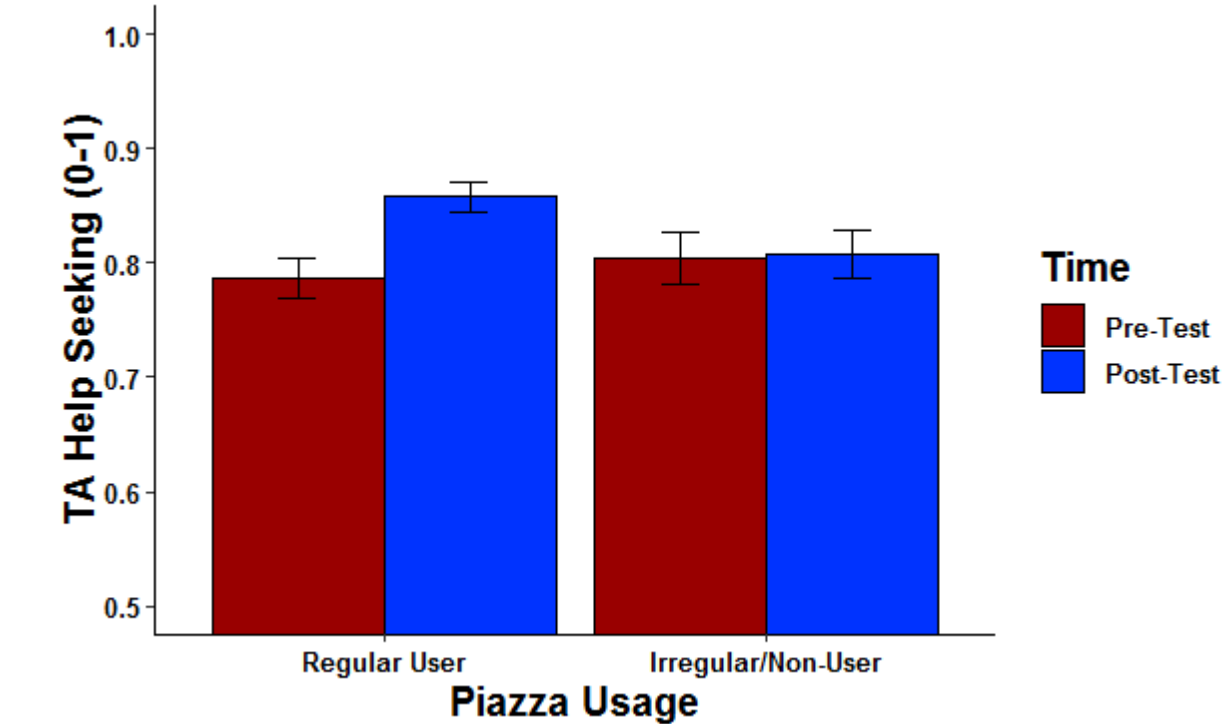
Findings

Neither attending office hours nor using Piazza appeared to affect student’s willingness to seek help from instructors or from people who were not instructors or TAs. However...



Students who attended office hours had greater improvement in their willingness to seek help from TAs.

Those who attended office hours also reported greater feelings of belonging in SOCI 102 at the end of the course.



Students who regularly used Piazza also showed greater increases in TA-Help-Seeking behaviour.

Piazza-users also had larger increases in their willingness to contribute to class discussions.

Next steps

- Develop resources for faculty members who would like to explore centrally-located and online office hours with TAs
- Assess impact of accessible office hours on students’ help-seeking behaviour in additional contexts
- Further explore the role TAs play in creating supportive learning environments



Acknowledgement

We gratefully acknowledge the financial support for this project provided by UBC Vancouver students via the Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund.

We would also like to acknowledge that this project is taking place on the traditional and unceded territory of the Musqueam people.

References

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